



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

denial of their ancient rights, what is the worth of the air of benignity and the sanctified intonation? If truth is to mean inspired mistranslation and the systematic falsifying of religious history in the interests of sentiment; and if righteousness is to mean the cold-blooded urging of iniquitous wars in the name of national prestige, what better is all this mellifluous morality than the tender mercies of the wicked?" Towards Ruskin, he is much more sympathetic. He says of him, in comparison with Carlyle, that "his preparation, in the close study of relations in the department of æsthetics, seems to give him an abnormal power of seeing and representing in groups and masses the connections of our industrial life, which Carlyle only saw under a few ethical headings, though he, too, had the pictorial eye. Carlyle at bottom is Puritan, is always running into ethical metaphor, where Ruskin, tingling under a primary æsthetic stimulus, gives us in a flash the actual facts. Thus he is in these matters by far the more 'inevitable' critic, to use Wordsworth's phrase." He has to add, however, that "Ruskin is, so far as my reading goes, the most self-contradictory writer who ever lived," and that "for want of patience and temper, and, alas! want of continuous sanity, he has set against him alike economists, artists, democrats, rationalists, scientists; and the luxury of all-round vituperation is dearly bought at that price by a man who wants to make proselytes." The concluding essay is on Mr. Herbert Spencer, whom Mr. Robertson apostrophizes as his "spiritual Father and honored Master." In the midst of his laudations, however, he admits that Mr. Spencer "is not a born metaphysician: he has not that alertness of insight into the intricacies of language which enables a thinker in general to avoid fallacy and carry forward the processes of mental analysis." And indeed he points out so many fallacies in Mr. Spencer's reasonings, that one wonders a little at his persistent admiration. In his view of society, he definitely throws off Mr. Spencer's guidance, and criticises him very much in the spirit of Mr. Ritchie's "Principles of State Interference." He has some pointed remarks also on Mr. Spencer's view of religion.

On the whole the volume, though not containing anything very original, is one of considerable interest. The style is somewhat slipshod, and perhaps sometimes a little stilted. Carlyle and Ruskin, it seems, have not "patience to *expiscate* a general truth." His materialism, too, comes out rather crudely at times; as when he says that "men's minds are the outcome of their bodies, which are more or less extensive modifications of the bodies of their parents or ancestors." And his "Epilogue," in which his own views on social reform are given, does not appear to the present reviewer to be a very enlightening contribution to the subject. But the critical notices may be commended to the attention of all who are interested in our modern humanists. They are always vigorous and stimulating, and sometimes penetrating and original.

J. S. MACKENZIE.

BROWNING AS A PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TEACHER. By Henry Jones, M.A., Professor of Philosophy in the University College of North Wales. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1891. Pp. xii., 367.

This book is not a series of disconnected studies; its object is rather to explain and enforce a very definite view regarding the position of Browning as a philo-

sophical and religious teacher. Accordingly, it will be best to preface such criticism as can be offered here by a short statement of what appears to be most essential in this view, although any such attempt to reduce the substance of a book to a few propositions must do some injustice to the author.

In the first place, then, Professor Jones in this book examines Browning's poetry not from the literary, but from the philosophical, point of view. He does not profess to estimate the value of the poems as works of art; he considers them merely as the expression of certain ideas,—a certain way of looking at and representing the world. Poetry, as he explains in some interesting pages, often introduces to men's minds in its own imaginative fashion ideas which philosophy only later presents in the shape of a reasoned statement; and it may thus provide the spiritual food of a generation which could not justify philosophically the beliefs which actuate and inspire it. This, the author holds, is emphatically the case with Browning, whom he couples with Carlyle as one of the great teachers of the time,—a teacher, too, whose sanguine faith has supplied the deficiencies of his gloomier contemporary. It is Professor Jones's first object, therefore, to connect the supreme utterances of Browning into a philosophy of life.

But Browning himself was not content to express in a poetic form certain ideas and a certain faith. He went beyond the strict limits of his art, and attempted to supply, almost in the manner of a philosopher, a reasoned justification of this faith. The faith itself, Browning's poetic beliefs, may best be gathered from the earlier works, ending with and including "*The Ring and the Book*": the philosophy, though indicated here and there earlier, is fully developed only in the later poems (1870 to 1889). And, as Professor Jones holds, and, I think, truly holds: whereas the poet's beliefs or ideas have a high value, his explicit philosophy is inadequate to them, and has much less value. The former yield what may be called an optimistic idealism, and a doctrine of the unity of God and man. Man appears as a progressive being, realizing, though never fully attaining, a moral ideal; realizing it even where he appears to fail, and finding in evil not only an obstacle, but also the instrument or negative condition of his advance. And alike in the ideal which inspires man, the love to which it gives birth, and the struggle towards it, the divine spirit is present, and is the guarantee (if a dangerous word may be used) at once of the necessity and the impotence of evil. The profound significance of Browning's poetry Professor Jones finds in the boldness with which this faith is set forth, and in the light which it throws on the darkest places of the mind and the most menacing problems of life. But in Browning's later poems this faith is combined with, and even made to depend upon, a peculiar doctrine of nescience or scepticism. A unity with God underlies man's moral nature and effort; but his intellect is regarded as merely human, and even as purely individual. His love is a ray of the central sun; his knowledge is a private possession of his own, and therefore no knowledge at all. And Professor Jones's object is to show that this doctrine of nescience is both self-destructive and destructive of Browning's optimism, and to indicate a philosophical theory which, instead of destroying Browning's optimism, would justify it. In other words, he appeals from Browning the philosopher to Browning the poet, and by implication he appeals from Browning the philosopher to another philosophy. This he has, of course, no opportunity to develop fully; but the

reader divines it (rightly or wrongly) to be in substance Hegelianism, modified by a hearty acceptance of the positive results of natural science.

Even so meagre a sketch as this will show the originality and interest of Professor Jones's design; and, the execution being worthy of the design, he has produced a really valuable book. To us his main contention seems just, and no reader who dissents from it will fail to recognize the vigor and suggestiveness of the argument. Professor Jones writes, too, with a freshness, and enforces his beliefs with a fervor, that win upon his reader; and it must not be thought that his rejection of Browning's theory of knowledge weakens his tone of sympathy and reverence towards the poet. His literary criticism, where it occurs, is so good that one only wishes there had been room for more of it; he has many striking sentences and passages (*e.g.*, that on Carlyle); and the only literary defect of the book, occasional diffuseness and repetition, seems to be due to the author's anxiety to make a difficult argument perfectly clear.

To examine this whole argument in a short review would be quite impossible, but two or three points may be indicated where re-consideration or re-statement seems to be desirable. Thus, one may value all that Professor Jones says of Browning without sharing his *comparative* estimate of Browning's position. To the present writer he seems to do much less than justice to Wordsworth, to Shelley, and (by implication) to Tennyson, and to understate the community of tendency which exists between these poets and Browning. Again, while the author prepares us to look on Browning as the prophet of truths not yet formulated by philosophy, his book suggests that Browning's ideas, so far as they are true, coincide on the whole with those of a philosophy complete before the poet began to write. This seems to be an inconsistency; but perhaps Professor Jones means that no purely *British* philosophy gives adequate expression to the substance of Browning's faith. In the third place, it is difficult not to regret that Professor Jones's main argument is set forth so copiously, that comparatively little space is left for the exhibition of the particular ways and concrete instances in which the poet gives an optimistic interpretation of life,—for some readers will think that the special value and originality of Browning's poetry lies here rather than in his general ideas. Lastly, while Professor Jones's statement of Browning's strange theory of knowledge is very full and clear, he seems not to give sufficient emphasis to certain elements in that poetic faith which he considers to be the imaginative expression of a true philosophy. For instance, the idea of immortality is continually recurring in Browning's poetry; he preaches immortality more persistently than any other English poet. Yet one would hardly gather this from Professor Jones's book. We do not mean that he ignores or misrepresents the poet's teaching on this subject or similar subjects. He clearly recognizes that, according to the philosophy that may be extracted from Browning, the unity of the divine and the human is by no means an absolute identity, and the ideal of humanity is never perfectly realized. But this side of the truth probably appears to him less important just now than the other side,—the idea that such a unity of the divine and human does exist, and that man does, in some sense, realize his ideal; and, therefore, he places this idea in relief. I sympathize with his preference, but I think it somewhat lessens the value of his book; for it is peculiarly characteristic of Browning that he feels the imperfection of man's

achievement quite as keenly as the greatness and certainty of his victory. If Hegel had a positive dislike of the truth or half-truth that there is always an unattainable "beyond," Browning is for ever insisting on this "beyond." He is not only the poet of "immanence," he is not less the singer of that "something evermore about to be" of which Wordsworth wrote. His insistence on the idea of immortality is one of the ways in which this sense of imperfection shows itself, and perhaps no words of his have gone more piercingly home to his readers' hearts than those in which he gives a voice to the hope that a day will come when "the broken arcs" will be seen as a "perfect round." In writing of immortality he sometimes falls below the height of his "supreme utterances," and it may be that in his use of the idea he gave an imaginative rather than a philosophical expression to a spiritual truth. But however this may be, our point is that, in Browning's poetic faith, the sense of imperfection and of the difference between the divine and human is not less strong than the poet's optimism and his sense of a divine presence in humanity. These are, as Professor Jones would probably say, only two aspects of a single truth. He will make his exposition still more satisfactory, and will render a further service to his readers, if in a second edition he gives greater relief to the first of them, and shows more at length how it may philosophically be united with those ideas on which he has dealt with so sympathetic an understanding and so unforced an eloquence.

A. C. BRADLEY.

RIDDLES OF THE SPHINX: a Study in the Philosophy of Evolution. By a Troglodyte. London (Sonnenschein, 1891).

Systems of metaphysics are seldom written at all; but still more seldom does the philosophical reader meet with a system conceived with such freshness of mind and expounded with such vigor and buoyancy of style that it persuades and entertains him, even where he is disposed to question its conclusions. The Troglodyte writes from the Cave, to which, as in duty bound, he has returned; but he has been in the upper world, and describes what he has seen with a confidence which recalls some of the best days of metaphysics. The flippant may suggest that it is easy under the circumstances to mistake the moon for the sun. But it is something to have seen the moon; and the Troglodyte's luminary, whichever he has seen, is sufficiently dazzling. In a word, the book is of such ability and originality that no serious reader can help admiring it, and learning much from its happy combination of the constructive gift with sceptical insight into the difficulties of philosophical problems.

Though a work of metaphysics, it possesses ethical interest. The author regards the questions of philosophy as ultimately questions of practical life; and, according to the order which he follows in the exposition, it is the impossibility of squaring current philosophy with the requirements of practical life which leads him to attempt yet another solution. His system is offered as an alternative to pessimism, which, taken in its widest sense as the belief that the universe whether of action or of thought is not rational, he treats as the outcome of agnosticism. Agnosticism leads to scepticism, and this to pessimism. Agnosticism both in its Spencerian and its Kantian form he successfully attacks; but to the other two he is more tender, and he states their case with a generosity